

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL RAYMOND  
BOUCHARD,  
SENIOR POLICE ADVISOR, CJTF-PHOENIX (VIA TELECONFERENCE)

LOCATION: THE PENTAGON, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

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COL. BOUCHARD: Good evening.

JACK HOLT (director, DOD Press Office): Colonel Bouchard, Jack Holt  
here, and welcome to the bloggers roundtable. Thanks for joining us this  
-- our morning, your evening.

Do you have an opening statement, sir?

COL. BOUCHARD: Actually, I do not. I apologize for that.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Not a problem. We can move right into the question  
portion of our roundtable discussion here.

And Grim, why don't you get us started?

Q All right. Good morning, Colonel, here, evening there. I would  
like to ask you about the recent shift in tactics among the Taliban to try

and lure Afghan police and particularly the Canadians out into sort of far-flung district areas where they'd have to travel out and are vulnerable to ambushes. Can you talk about how you are -- how observations or shifts in tactics like that influence how you change training?

COL. BOUCHARD: The -- well, first of all, our mentor teams are just barely starting to get out to districts and meet that dispersion, as you said. So basically, it's not so much that the Taliban are changing the tactics yet, it's the fact that they've been more aggressive, and this is the same -- this is the time of the season that we expect that to happen anyways. And we knew there was going to be an increase right up from about 4th of July and shortly after that.

The next trick is to monitor the activity to see if it decreases or if it continues to rise, and if it continues to rise, then it will definitely depart between -- from the previous years as we've graphed the activity.

Q And are you considering how you might need to change the -- either the training or the equipment of the Afghan police to meet these more kind of -- like the need to protect district centers and things like that that are far removed from Kandahar?

COL. BOUCHARD: They are -- as far as looking at the different equipment and what is being supplied to the Afghan police, there's always been that goal to increase the armored protection and the crew serve in the future. It's just that we don't have enough of those supplies here yet. So I'm not so sure that we're altering our plans based on what we're seeing from the most recent threat; it's just taking longer to implement.

Number -- the second point is that we're standing up and creating a different type of force, which they're calling the civil order police. They are a quick, rapid-response group that would help put down a national crisis or insurgent activity. Those folks will be far more heavily armored and far more -- heavier weapons. And those are on order and we're expecting that equipment to arrive by the end of the calendar year. A lot of the equipment is going to look similar to what our Marines are currently using in Iraq, if the plan goes through.

And we are -- just barely stood up the first three battalions, and they've graduated from their initial basic training within the last two months. So this is a new initiative that we're hoping will bear fruit against the insurgent activity.

Q Thank you, Colonel.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Andrew.

Q

Colonel, Andrew Lubin here. How are you doing, sir?

COL. BOUCHARD: Good. It's good to hear from you again.

Q Just wish I was out there with you guys. Charlie needed to come back and -- (inaudible) -- the home front. From ON Point.

Colonel, a quick question. What we're seeing now more than anything else is the amount of drugs coming out of Afghanistan, how they're using drugs to fund the Taliban. Wall Street Journal, certainly no liberal newspaper, reported that Prime Minister Karzai's brother is heavily involved in the drug trade. What are we doing to kind of work on stopping some of this?

COL. BOUCHARD: At the moment, we're leaving that more up to the folks that are working the economic aspects for the nation. So that's falling more under the USAID and the Department of State. And that's really their strategy and I really -- that's going outside of my expertise or purview.

Q Okay, but it is being dealt with, then, as far as you're aware?

COL. BOUCHARD: Well, what they're working on is they're trying to find replacements and substitutes to support the local villages to reduce the amount of drug smuggling and growing. As far as the police portion, we are watching and stepping (up) activities along the borders and working closely with the border police and working to ensure that they're stepping up their activities and proper check of vehicles that are crossing borders. And I guess that would be our contribution from the police side.

Q Okay. Are there any figures as far as amounts? I know in the States they run the amount of pounds seized. Are there any figures on how much heroin was seized last year versus this year versus the year before?

COL. BOUCHARD: I really don't have those kind of numbers at the tip of my fingertips, but, you know, that goes along more of the federal justice programs and types where they're focusing on the drug eradication.

Q Okay.

COL. BOUCHARD: I can say that we're looking at reports on a weekly basis where they're collecting -- they'll do stops where they're picking up hundreds of kilograms at a time at different traffic control stops and such.

Q Okay, great. Thank you.

MR. HOLT: David Axe.

Q Sir, thanks for taking the time. I really appreciate it. Can you expand a little bit on your description of the re-equipment program for Afghan police? You say the equipment will be like the Marines'. Does that mean we're talking up-armored vehicles?

COL. BOUCHARD: We're actually talking about for the Civil Order Police they're looking at the Mine Resistant Assault Platform, which is

what the Marines are using, the wheel-type vehicle with a v-shaped bottom, and it's got the up-armored. And that's how they would move their platoons and squads quickly to the area that they're needed.

Q Okay, great.

And when it comes to that quick reaction force, are you concerned about the ethnic and tribal problem of having what some local Afghans might consider foreigners coming in to do law enforcement?

COL. BOUCHARD: One of the things that we look hard at when they're developing and forming the police elements is making sure that there is not a one-sided particular tribe affiliation that forms that element. So it's not necessarily ethnic or tribal rebalancing, but it is a cognizant fact that whoever's doing the recruiting and hiring isn't selecting their particular sect or their friends or relatives so that it's representative of the locality.

And in the Civil Order Police, because that's more of a national element, they're able to do more of what we're calling a balancing act and making sure that those folks are represented nationwide.

Q Okay, thank you very much.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Any follow-up questions?

Q This is Grim from Blackfive. I have one. The new force that you are thinking about, the quick response force, for more severe emergencies that we were talking about earlier, is there any thought to making elements of that air mobile?

COL. BOUCHARD: That hasn't come up on the table, and the -- that's probably a far more advanced police force than we're really ready to do here in Afghanistan because they are just barely starting to build an air corps on the army side, and they've got just a very few air frames at this point. So it would be incredibly ambitious to try to equip at this time with air assets.

The other thing is, is folks have asked about the up-armored and more fire power. At the same time, we need to remember that we're trying to form a police force not an army, so we do not want to make the police force into a paramilitary element or something that the international community would be concerned with, that it's the military creating a police force that looks just like the military. So we're trying to be sensitive to those perspectives, also.

Q Colonel, thank you.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Anything else?

Q Yes, I do, Colonel, if we have time. Jack, we have time for another one?

MR. HOLT: Sure, yes.

Q Colonel, I appreciate your training Task Force 80 -- Task Force Phoenix is mostly training the police and all. But what are you doing as far as interdicting and stopping the Taliban coming in from Pakistan? The border police are involved in that as are, I would assume, the normal Afghan police.

COL. BOUCHARD: The -- what you're finding is, we've got joint and combined operations where we have the coalition forces, the national army and their police working in conjunction and setting up operations, within those areas along the border, to counter the insurgents and to fight against any aggressive insurgent activity. So it's a joint and combined effort. And in addition, we're working to rebuild the various border facilities that are along the border and building up the checkpoints so that the border police can safely inspect and check vehicles that are crossing from one country to the other.

Q Okay, great, thank you.

MR. HOLT: All right, is that it, any more?

All right, Colonel Bouchard, thank you so much for being with us this morning, this evening in your case. We appreciated it and hopefully we can do this again.

COL. BOUCHARD: Sure and thank you very much.

MR. HOLT: Okay, thank you, sir.

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